



a.



b.



c.

E. APPENDIX

2. EVALUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

a. DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS

THE LEGACY OF SUBURBAN PLANNING AND ZONING IN DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS OVER fifty years is a dispersed and low density town center. The physical characteristics of the town center are illustrated in the three diagnostic diagrams opposite, which distill Los Alamos into three primary urban characteristics.

The first diagram describes the existing street grid. As befits Los Alamos’ topography, the major through-roads - Trinity Drive, Central Avenue, and Canyon Road - run east to west. A loose network of streets provide north to south connections, however only 15th Street spans the entire distance of the mesa. The result of this street pattern is “superblocks,” which measure 500’ to 800’ per side, an urban pattern that generates disconnected buildings, uncontrolled parking, fast streets and random, chaotic public space

The lack of north-south cross streets is compensated by an abundance of parking lots, which serve as shortcuts and defacto streets between Central and Trinity. Both streets have far more unregulated curb cuts and driveways than controlled intersections, which impedes traffic flow and increases the risk of accidents, both to vehicles and especially to pedestrians. Additionally, the parking lots can accommodate over 4000 cars, and combined with the streets constitute 70% of the developable land area in Downtown. The second diagram clearly shows that downtown Los Alamos is designed for automobiles, ensuring a pedestrian unfriendly town center.

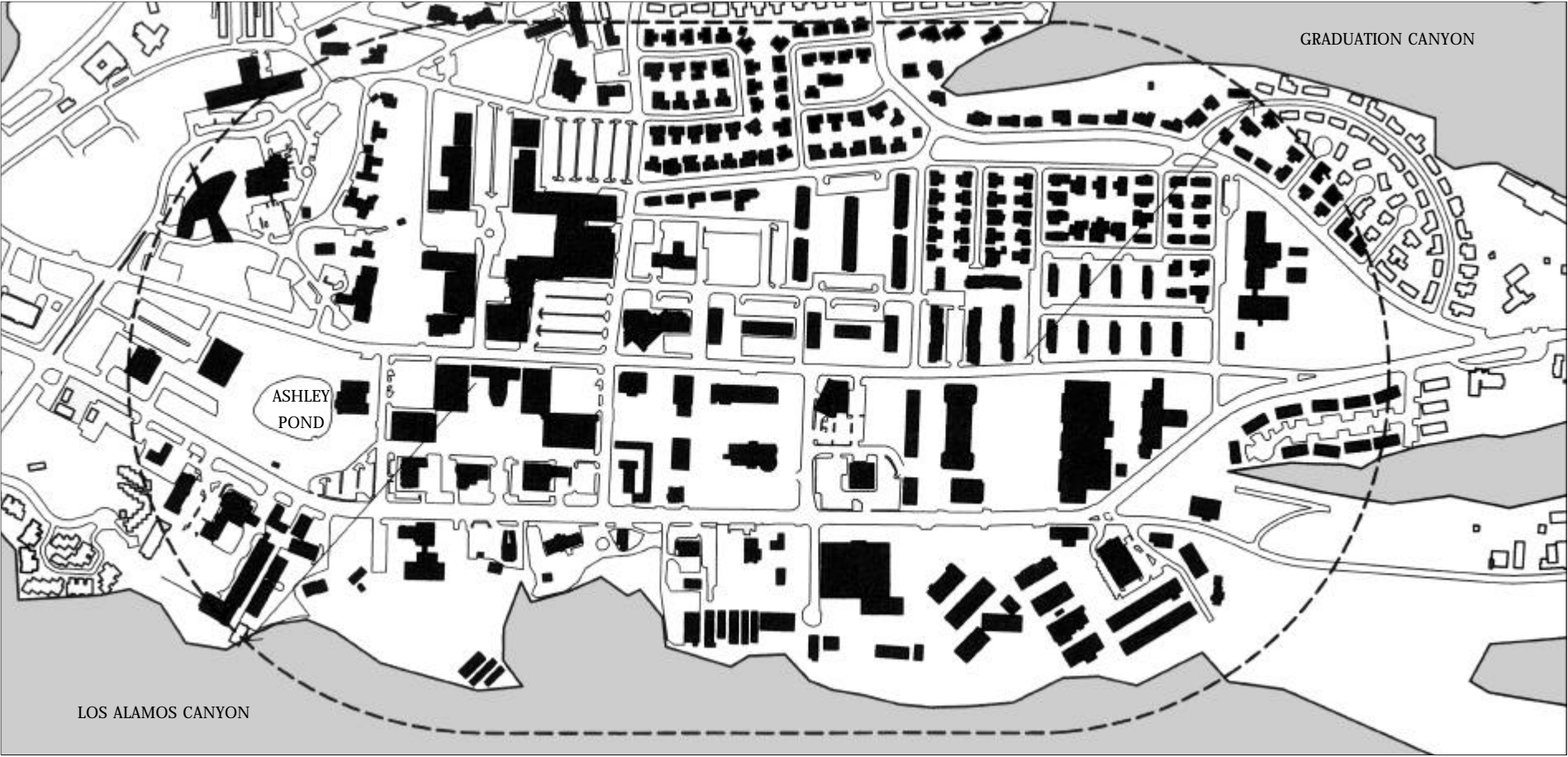
Ultimately, the area of asphalt in Downtown Los Alamos is 30% more than the square footage of all buildings. A comparison between the area of asphalt and buildings can be made with the final diagram, which shows the pattern of existing buildings. The most intense concentration is in the area of Central Avenue and Main Street, near the Post Office, while the sparseness of building from 15th Street to the intersection of Trinity Drive and Central Avenue indicate opportunities for infill. The resulting dispersion of uses and lack of defined street space is evident.

The elements analyzed individually by these diagrams combine to produce a typical suburban sprawl pattern of disconnected and random buildings centered in large parking lots, obvious from the experience of being in Downtown Los Alamos and painfully visible in the aerial photograph below.



d.

- a. DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS STREET GRID
- b. DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS STREET GRID AND PARKING LOTS
- c. DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS FIGURE-GROUND DIAGRAM
- d. DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH LOOKING NORTHWEST



a.



c.



d.

E. APPENDIX

2. EVALUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

b. LOS ALAMOS/SANTA FE COMPARISON

THE SPRAWLING NATURE OF LOS ALAMOS’ TOWN CENTER IS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED IN comparison with its neighbor down the hill, Santa Fe.

Using a 1/4 mile radius circle as a unit of urban measurement for walkable neighborhoods (a five minute walk), the diagnostic diagrams opposite reveal that Downtown Los Alamos has two centers, one located at the Central Avenue and Main Street intersection, and the other located at the Mari-Mac Mall. In contrast, Downtown Santa Fe can be contained within a single circle centered on its Plaza; it covers half the area with a higher volume of buildings. However, because Downtown Santa Fe has four times Los Alamos’ population in residents and tourists, the town center of Los Alamos is in effect eight times larger than Santa Fe. Santa Fe’s greater density is achieved by narrow streets with pedestrian friendly sidewalks lined by storefronts, and multi-story, multi-use buildings which create the urban and economic vitality appropriate for a town center. Several Park Once structures relieve the need for surface parking.

Although this comparison does not suggest Los Alamos should imitate Santa Fe’s cultural, urban or architectural character, it does suggest a similar type of urban pattern necessary to support a pedestrian-oriented Main Street. Streets and sidewalks do not need to be as narrow as in Santa Fe, but a continuous network of walkable streets should be provided that interconnect meaningful and multiple destinations. Continuous building frontage, without large gaps for parking, ensures that the pedestrian experience will be safe, convenient, and rewarding. Urban building types accommodating a vertical and/or adjacent mix of uses generate the compactness necessary for a wide range of uses to be included within a walking distance from each other. Parking should be shared among uses and reduced for that reason.



b.



e.



f.

- a. DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS

b. DOWNTOWN SANTA FE

c. TYPICAL DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS PARKING LOT

d. TYPICAL DOWNTOWN LOS ALAMOS STREET

e. TYPICAL DOWNTOWN SANTA FE STREET

f. TYPICAL DOWNTOWN SANTA FE STREET